Middle Tamil

The evolution of Old Tamil into **Middle Tamil**, which is generally taken to have been completed by the 8th century,[1] was characterised by a number of phonological and grammatical changes. In phonological terms, the most important shifts were the virtual disappearance of the aytam (ஃ), an old phoneme,[2] the coalescence of the alveolar and dental nasals,[3] and the transformation of the alveolar plosive into a rhotic.[4] In grammar, the most important change was the emergence of the present tense. The present tense evolved out of the verb *kil* (கில்), meaning "to be possible" or "to befall". In Old Tamil, this verb was used as an aspect marker to indicate that an action was micro-durative, non-sustained or non-lasting, usually in combination with a time marker such as *ṉ* (ன்). In Middle Tamil, this usage evolved into a present tense marker – *kiṉṟa* (கின்ற) – which combined the old aspect and time markers.[5]

From the period of the Pallava dynasty onwards, a number of Sanskrit loan-words entered Tamil, particularly in relation to political, religious and philosophical concepts.[6] Sanskrit also influenced Tamil grammar, in the increased use of cases and in declined nouns becoming adjuncts of verbs,[7] and phonology. The forms of writing in Tamil have developed through years.[8] The Tamil script also changed in the period of Middle Tamil. Tamil Brahmi and Vaṭṭeḻuttu, into which it evolved, were the main scripts used in Old Tamil inscriptions. From the 8th century onwards, however, the Pallavas began using a new script, derived from the Pallava Grantha script which was used to write Sanskrit, which eventually replaced Vaṭṭeḻuttu.[9]

Middle Tamil is attested in many inscriptions, and in a significant body of secular and religious literature.[10] These include the religious poems and songs of the Bhakti poets, such as the Tēvāram verses on Shaivism and Nālāyira Tivya Pirapantam on Vaishnavism,[11] and adaptations of religious legends such as the 12th century Tamil Ramayana composed by Kamban and the story of 63 shaivite devotees known as Periyapurāṇam.[12] Iraiyaṉār Akapporuḷ, an early treatise on love poetics, and Naṉṉūl, a 12th-century grammar that became the standard grammar of literary Tamil, are also from the Middle Tamil period.[13]

There is a famous saying

> " திருவாசகத்துக்கு உருகார் ஒரு □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ உருகார்" (*tiruvācakattukku urukār ŏru vācakatti ṛkum urukār*)

Middle Tamil	
Era	Developed into Modern Tamil by the 16th century
Language family	Dravidian ▪ Southern ▪ Tamil–Kannada ▪ Tamil–Kodagu ▪ **Middle Tamil**
Early form	Old Tamil
Writing system	Tamil alphabet
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–
Glottolog	*None*

Tanjavur Tamil Inscription

translating to "He whose heart is not melted by *Thiruvasagam* cannot be melted by any *vasagam(saying)*".[14] The Thiruvasagam is composed by Manikkavasagar

References

1. Lehmann 1998, pp. 75–76
2. Kuiper 1958, p. 194
3. Meenakshisundaran 1965, pp. 132–133
4. Kuiper 1958, pp. 213–215
5. Rajam, V. S. (1985). "The Duration of an Action-Real or Aspectual? The Evolution of the Present Tense in Tamil". *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. **105** (2): 277. doi:10.2307/601707 (https://doi.org/10.2307%2F601707). JSTOR 601707 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/601707). at pp. 284–285
6. Meenakshisundaran 1965, pp. 173–174
7. Meenakshisundaran 1965, pp. 153–154
8. Meenakshisundaran 1965, pp. 145–146
9. Mahadevan 2003, pp. 208–213
10. Meenakshisundaran 1965, p. 119
11. Varadarajan 1988
12. Varadarajan 1988, pp. 155–157
13. Zvelebil 1992, p. 227
14. Macdonell 1994, p. 219

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